

3/19/1997  
TO A VERY  
SPECIAL NEICE

# Tulagi *LOVE. Mike*

*A World War II Experience*

as told by

Michael E. Blotter, Jr.

My story begins on August 7, 1942, when our D Company (Dog Company) of Edson's First Marine Raiders were making preparations to start the offensive of World War II. We were aboard five APD destroyers.

Navy cruisers as well as battle-ships stood just off the coast of Guadalcanal, bombarding its shoreline. We were preparing to land on the nearby small island of Tulagi. I could see puffs of smoke and flashes where the bombs were exploding.

The Marines were very quiet and in prayer for a successful landing.

## **Tulagi landing**

We went over the side of our

destroyers, into Higgins boats, and headed for shore.

Major "Jumping Joe" Chambers and Lt. Edwin Wheeler were our company commanders.

When we were about 15 feet from the beach we jumped overboard and waded ashore. Coral tore our dungarees and we received numerous cuts.

The earlier bombing had accomplished its job and, thank goodness, we did not receive any enemy fire.

I was a sniper scout, which meant I had to go out in advance of our company. Lt. Wheeler told Sgt. Clark and myself to scout ahead as a team.

Clark and I crawled through the jungle for about half a mile to the

top of a small hill. From there we could observe ahead about 2,000 feet.

### Enemy sighted

We saw five enemy soldiers with rifles and bayonets, marching away from us.

We opened fire.

My rifle was a Springfield 30 caliber. Sgt. Clark's was a Rising gun, which was only effective for about 500 yards.

Clark begged me for my rifle so he could fire at the enemy.

"No," I told him. "I trained for many months for this moment!"

We didn't hit any of the soldiers, but we sure scared the hell out of them. They jumped under



*The small island of Tulagi, near Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands group (Latitude 6 South, Longitude 155 East) doesn't make a spot on most maps, but Mike Blotter and his fellow U.S. Marine Corps buddies of Company D, First Raider Battalion, will never forget it. As a constant reminder, Mike to this day carries a 25 caliber bullet in his hip.*

a hut that was on stilts.

Our company moved ahead about a mile, into a valley.

### Pvt. Walsh, wounded

I saw a wounded Marine holding his leg. I recognized him as Pvt. Walsh from New York. It was then that I realized the enemy was firing real bullets at us.

We reported back to the company commander, and the company advanced.

### Pinned down

Suddenly an enemy machine-gun pinned us down under heavy fire.

Lt. Wheeler instructed Bill Hunt's squad to try to eliminate the machinegun. I was part of the squad.

We circled the hill to the right and started climbing. There was no cover.

We could see a sand-bagged circular gun emplacement with an anti-aircraft gun pointing skyward. On the side toward us was a steel drum shielding an entrance that had a burlap bag covering it. Off to the right was a lonely tree with a telephone

hanging about eight feet from the ground.

### **Fire in the hole!**

With two hand grenades in my patch pockets, I crawled to within about 10 feet of the emplacement.

I took out a grenade, pulled its pin and heaved it into the top opening of the emplacement. Then I quickly threw in the other one.

"Fire in the hole," I called out, as I was trained to do. This warned the men in our squad to throw themselves on the ground for protection from shrapnel.

### **Wounded in action**

Suddenly I heard enemy fire.

I saw Sgt. Clark spin around, hit in the shoulder.

Another Marine went down.

Then I was hit. It felt like someone had jammed a telephone pole into my groin. I thought, now Dad will get my \$10,000 life insurance.

Bill Hunt, our squad leader, rushed over and packed my open wound with sulpha powder. This quick action probably saved my

life.

To this day, I still have the 25 caliber bullet in my hip.

To escape the gunfire, Sgt. Clark and I rolled down the left side of the hill to even ground.

I was in shock and don't remember what happened to Clark. I do recall lying on the ground, bleeding heavily.

Dog Company moved forward.

One of my friends, Mickey Concannon from Brooklyn, bent over as he passed by me.

"Mike," Concannon said, "you are so lucky. You are going home!"

I remember smiling at that remark.

### **Alone with a rosary**

It was now about 3 p.m., and smoke from the shellfire was all around.

I could see Navy planes dropping their 500-pound bombs.

The jungle was screeching with wild parrots that had been disturbed.

I lapsed into unconsciousness with my rosary in my hand.

I remember hearing someone say he would be back to pick me

up.

### Waiting in darkness

It was dark when I was awakened by a noise coming toward me.

I looked around for a weapon of some sort.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the source of the noise was a wild hog rooting for food in the small shrubs around me.

What a relief. Then I must have lapsed back into unconsciousness.

### One year healing

I spent 12 months and 11 days in hospitals: New Caledonia; Wellington, New Zealand; San Diego Naval Hospital, Calif.; Philadelphia Naval Hospital and Swathmore Convalescent Home, Pa.

Finally I was released for duty.



*Pvt. Michael Edward Blotter, Jr., USMC, of Hillside, N.J., is awarded the Silver Star Medal for "conspicuous gallantry" at Tulagi.*

*The award was made by Col. A.E. Randall at Philadelphia Navy Yard.*

*Scanner Image of Official USMC Photo*

### Fellow Raider responds

Forty-seven years later, while vacationing at our cabin in eastern Washington state, I received an early morning telephone call from Hyannis, Mass.

When the caller had confirmed who I was, the first thing he said was, "The last time I saw you was on Tulagi with a Rosary in your hand."

It was Charlie Riley, another Raider, who was also in the landing and had a story he wanted to tell me.

I thank God for his caring and determination that, ultimately, saved my life.

On the following pages you will find Riley's personal account of my rescue, and also a poem about the Raiders by Pvt. Jack L. Blas.



Pvt. Michael E. Blotter, USMC, about to receive the nation's Silver Star Medal for conspicuous gallantry at Tulagi in 1942.



# The Promise Made

*A Letter to Mike Blotter*

by Charles Riley

My story begins in the mid-afternoon of December 7, 1942, on an island in the Pacific Ocean called Tulagi.

I was a radioman in Company D, First Raider Battalion. Shortly after our landing on Tulagi, I dropped my radio equipment and became a runner.

Following my company commander, Major Chambers, and nearing the top of a hill, a mortar shell burst and the Major fell back into my arms. He was wounded by several fragments of the shell.

While being treated, Major Chambers gave me a message to carry back to our commanding officer, Colonel "Red Mike" Edson.

The message read as follows:

*Dog Company commanding officer wounded. Meeting heavy resistance. Half the company are casualties.*

The third part of the message, fortunately, was later found to be untrue.

Not knowing where to go, I asked and someone pointed in a direction and said, "Take off."

I started out just below the ridge and somehow drifted down the hill.

Nearing the bottom of the hill, I found a wounded Marine. The first thing I noted was the rosary he was holding, then a wound in his left groin that had been tended to, and finally, I recognized him. It was Mike Blotter.

I asked how he was and if there was anything I could do.

"Come back and get me," he said, as he put his right hand on my left forearm. There was fear and pain in his voice.

I told him I would be back, and left.

Col. Edson was on a high point

with four other officers when I passed the message to him. He thanked me, pointed to a position about ten yards away and told me to wait there. At this time I told him I had to go back and get a wounded Marine. He said it wasn't my job as others were assigned to care for the wounded.

I left him, a bit angry, but my training told me he was right.

About an hour later I went to the aid station and inquired about Mike Blotter. When I was told he was not there, I requested two men and a stretcher, but was denied. I was assured Blotter would be brought in soon, so returned to my position.

When darkness was setting in, I again went to the position where the wounded were. Still no Blotter, and all the bearers had returned. My request for bearers and a stretcher was again denied, because all movement had been halted. I again returned to my position.

It was dark, and I was thinking about Blotter. How must he feel. The pain killer would have worn off. He was abandoned. Surely fear was mounting. But most of

all, I had told him I would be back.

I didn't give up. At about 10 p.m., I again went to the aid station. I, a lowly buck private, demanded a stretcher and some men to go after Blotter. I don't know who I talked to, but I got four men and two stretchers.

We set out in the direction I believed to be correct.

After a short while we met up with two wounded Marines. Neither was the one I was going after. We put them on the stretchers and returned to the aid station. Then, with only one stretcher and two men, we were off again.

I don't know how long it took, but I thought we were close to where Blotter was when I stumbled over something. It was a dead Jap on a stone path. I didn't recall this path and I began to realize that what I was doing was not very smart. There were not only enemy out there but also our own men.

Panic almost set in; I was about to turn around to tell the bearers that I was lost and now was ready to go back. Half way

through my turn, I saw what appeared to be a light around a tree about 50 feet away.

We went up the hill, found Blotter and took him back.

To this day, I believe, the light I saw was rays from the rosary. Blotter was praying, and I was an instrument in carrying out the answer to his prayers.

### Postscript

*Dear Mike:*

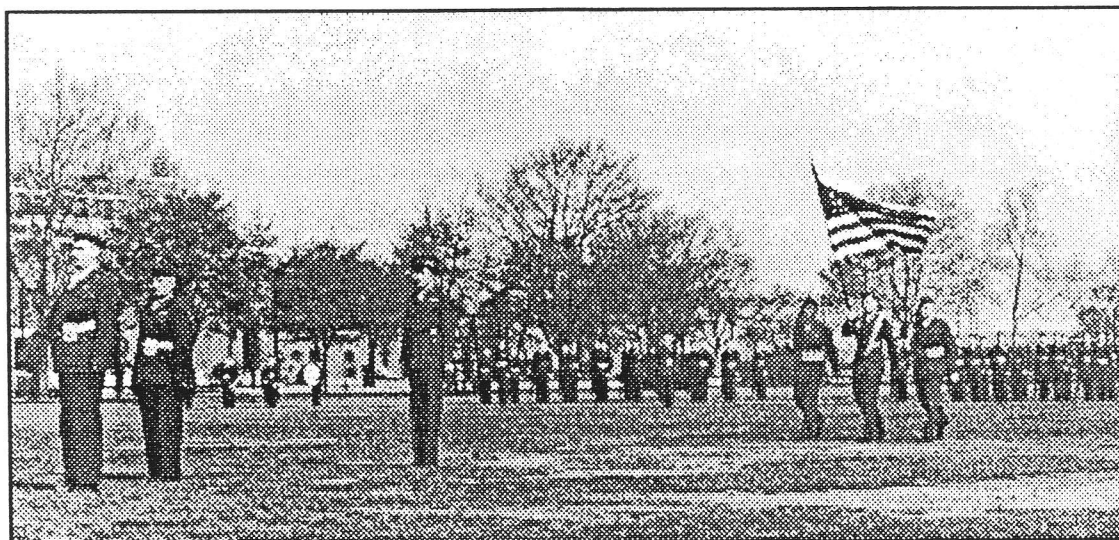
*I'm not much of a writer so you can consider this as notes and write it any way you like. It can be shortened or lengthened, but the story I remember is true.*

### Questions:

- *I disobeyed Col. Edson (or obeyed a higher authority?)*
- *Who gave me the stretcher and crew?*
- *How did I find my way in strange territory?*
- *Who were the bearers?*
- *Why wasn't I challenged by friend or foe?*
- *Were any of the events according to military rules.*
- *Who were the other two we brought in?*

*As unbelievable as it is, it is true. The only answer is the rosary.*

*Love and God Bless,  
Charlie*



*Marine Corps Award Ceremony at which Mike Blotter was presented the Silver Star Medal.*



# The Raiders at Guadalcanal

by Pvt. Jack L. Blas

*When the sands of time are sifted  
And glowing tales of heroes spun  
The legend of the Raiders  
Will have its day in the sun!*

*Without volley of drums or fanfare of trumpet  
There emerged from the ocean  
Men with one notion  
They were shrouded in green  
To blend with the shore  
Then gave vent to their spleen  
As they clambered and swore.*

*From here on, boys now suddenly men  
Charged into battle, the epic beginning;  
An epic of daring, of men with one yen—  
They meant to have both the first and last inning.*

*Up ravine, down gully, guns crackling, swords shied,  
Through brush of dense jungle they quickened their stride.  
The youth of a nation, Wake Island in mind  
Made ready to grapple in full battle line.*

*From ambush of tree tops, from caves meant to shield  
Came volleys of lead and the rasp of cold steel;  
The zooming of planes, the whistle of shell—  
For uncounted hours they blasted through Hell.  
The drum of machine guns, the thunder of bombs—  
Death grinned through the smoke, but our boys pushed on.*

*So day met night and darkness fell  
The sky belched with the flames of hell  
Earth shuddered with bombs as bayonets thrust  
But they charged through the dawn shouting "Fight 'til we bust!"*

*So ends the saga of that bloody shore  
A legend of men battling grim to the fore.  
No hearts will beat braver at war's grand finale  
than THE FIRST MARINE RAIDERS at Guadalcanal.*

To Mike  
Best Wishes  
Fritz Payne

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## About the Author

**Michael Edward "Mike" Blotter, Jr.**, was born on August 1, 1915, in Garwood, New Jersey. He was raised in Garwood.

His father, Michael Edward

Blotter, Sr., a native of Lithuania, came to America at age 19. He met and married Mary Husbeck, and worked at a foundry in Garwood. He later went into farming.



**Mary Catherine Condon**

with her future husband

**Michael E. Blotter, Jr.**

March 19, 1944

Michael (junior) made the decision to join the U.S. Marine Corps in January of 1942. He received a medical discharge in August of '46.

Michael met his future wife, Sgt. Mary Catherine Condon, when she was also serving in the Marine Corps. The couple were married at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Waterloo, Iowa (her hometown), on July 8, 1946. They made their home in New Jersey (Westfield, Garwood and Rahway) where their first three children were born.

In October of 1957, the Blotter family relocated to Palm Springs, Calif., where two more children were born.

The five children, in order of birth are: Kathleen Marie, Nancy Claire, Michael Edward, Thomas Leonard and Mary Patricia.

Michael and Mary Blotter are the retired owners of Blotter Electrical Fixtures of Palm Springs, where they now (1992) continue to reside.

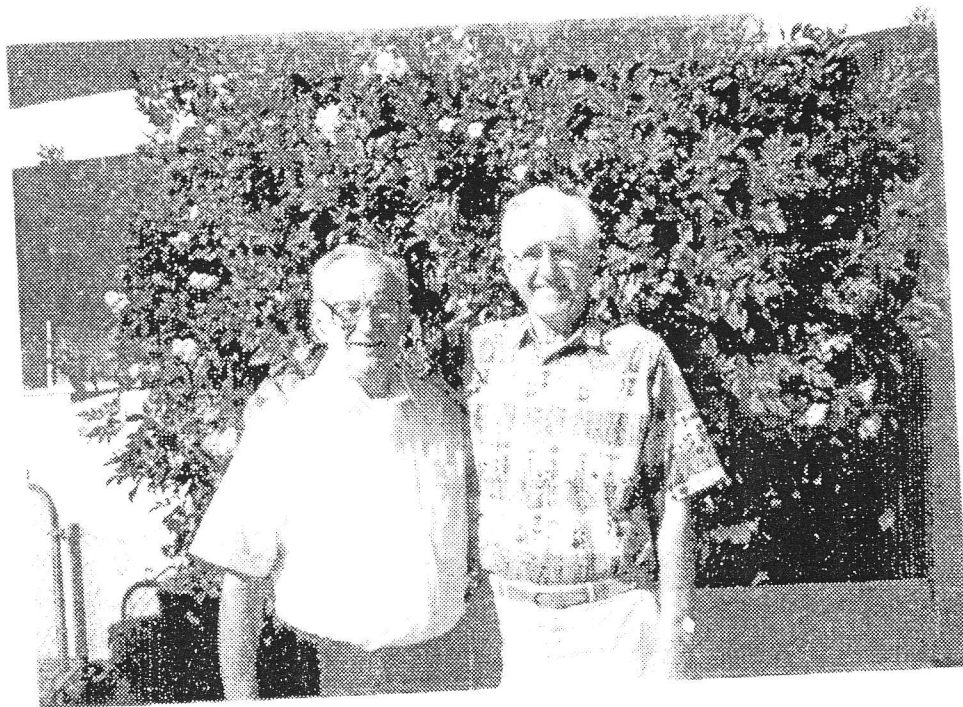
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compiled by

**Kathleen Marie (Blotter) Moberg**

Seaside, Oregon  
December 1992

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CHARLIE AND I